



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR NEW WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) today announced it is soliciting proposals to develop additional women's business centers (WBCs) across the country. The centers provide women entrepreneurs with business training and counseling, financial and technical assistance, mentoring and access to the SBA's programs and services. Eighty WBCs currently operate nationwide.

The agency has issued two separate program announcements: one to open new WBCs and the other to continue to fund existing centers. The SBA seeks applications only from private, nonprofit organizations. The agency will give special consideration to applicants from states and territories without centers as of September 30, 1999: Kansas, Nebraska, Virginia, Guam and American Samoa.

New centers can receive up to \$140,000 per year over a five-year funding cycle. Existing centers can apply for continued funding to receive up to \$125,000 per year over a five-year period. In addition, "graduated" WBCs that no longer receive federal funding can apply for the second program announcement. The centers must match the SBA's grant, beginning with \$1 for every \$2 of federal funding for the first two years of the grant and \$1 for every \$1 of federal funding for the third, fourth and fifth years of the grant.

The application period for new WBCs opened January 12, 2000, and closes March 1, 2000. The SBA's Office of Procurement and Grants Management must receive all proposals by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on March 1. The application period for continued funding opened January 13, 2000, and closes March 2, 2000. The SBA's Office of Procurement and Grants Management must receive all proposals by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on March 2. Only WBCs in their fifth year of funding and active graduated WBCs can apply for this program announcement. Copies of either RFP are available from the Office of Women's Business Ownership and can be obtained by calling 202-205-6673. They are also available online at www.sba.gov or www.onlinewbc.org.

WBCs address the unique needs of women entrepreneurs by providing long-term training and counseling. Each center tailors its services to its community and targets clients who are socially or economically disadvantaged. For more information on the WBCs or other services offered by the SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership, visit the Web site at www.sba.gov/womeninbusiness.

For more information on all of SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1 800 U ASK SBA, or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.